16 Aug 1903

CLEEVE HOUSE,
MELKSHAM,
WILTS.

Sunday.

My Billy.

I wish Clive had not thought you looking ill. Is anything the matter? Are you really melancholy? Perhaps Maurice will cheer you up as you may have been getting rather bored by Wells. If you have been having more toothache, do really go & see Tidal while you are in London as I don't know what we should do if you started

(If) suppose you will somehow get it changed from the station

16 Aug 1901

Sunday.

CLEEVE HOUSE,
MELKSHAM,
WILTS.

My Billy.

I wish Clive hadn't thought you looking ill. Is anything the matter? Are you really melancholy? Perhaps Mamartian ink cheer you up as you may have been getting rather bored by Wells. If you have been having more headache, do really go & see Tisdal while you are in London as I don't know what we should do if you started

toothache in Italy. It would be too wretched.

We have been to lunch with Mrs Raven Hills today. Some other dull people were there, but I always find it a relief to get away even for a few hours from this Bell atmosphere. Thank God. We must have another Sunday here. I have had a telegram from Walter Lamb to say that Gwen arrived safely.

very kind of him, isn't it? I must write & thank him & feel guilty at the thought of all I said about him & how it will reappear trans. formed by us at your next Thursday evening or by Lytton in Sarum. Clive found a letter from Lytton waiting for him when we got back from Bath. He is somewhere in the wilds with James & says the beauties of nature make him happy - for a time.)

suppose for the moment at any rate he is removed from any amours.

Julian is very good & very charming but teasing poor little boy which makes him unhappy sometimes. Have you heard from Hilton Young yet? I don't think he can have got your letter for I see on looking at his he does say. 'I shall be at Bath for a few days more' & gives you no address at Bath. In spite of all Clive said I should get on quite well with him as a brother in law. But I don't think you would really like to marry him. do you? I have ordered your hair to-day to be sent to Edael by train.

T. PARSONS 3.2.73

1908

Telegraph and Station Seend.

CLEEVE HOUSE,
MELKSHAM,
WILTS.

Aug. 18.

My Billy.

I had a melancholy letter from you today. Why are you so melancholy? P.S. I asked you that face to face I should be told that you were ill. But when you get pen to paper, perhaps truth will out. After all we shall not be apart for nearly so long this year as we were last & then we shall be together for a whole month. Do cheer up. Clive & I talk of our country house. It will have to be in Norfolk

I think it is in some flat land which will never become popular. We shall get an old farm house & add on rooms & a studio for me & a study for Clive & a gardener's cottage for you. I shall have a formal garden, arranged without much knowledge of horticulture but with exquisite taste & you will have to keep an untidy shrubbery for the use of Julian & Belinda. Then we shall hardly ever come here as I shall always want to have my own friends to stay with me in my own house.

Clive had another letter from

Saxon today which left us im-
pression on my mind. I see
from Walter Lamb-Sussex is well
& happy. will be glad to hear.
Its really very odd about H.V.
Of course, according to Olivia.
that is the kind of way in
which he does behave when
he is in love. & it is possible
that in such circumstances
he may think it correct &
fit at first very friendly.
they call Offence at intruding
& have a tiff. I should have
given him credit for more
sense though. & perhaps the
real reason is that he never
got your letter. Anyhow I
expect you have risked a
long & heavy afternoons work
into him.

Is Mauritius as nice as ever?
I hope you aren't idly in-

comfortable. Clive has been writing a long letter to Cork's & in a fortnight we shall be starting. There is something very odd about the Stephens setting forth on their travels. Perhaps the Bell element with land security to them this time. We might to have learnt sense too.

[illegible] I have no nerves. It has turned cold & horrid. I have been painting & nothing has happened. Julian holds out his arms to come to me & pushes away the old nurse - a great sign of intelligence & good taste. He is behaving angelically - sleeping all night & good by day. Has yours come yet & is it good? How is your tooth? Yours V.B.

Did I tell you our address?

(28)

Telegraph and Station } Seend.

Glencarron Lodge
Achnasellach
Ross.shire.

CLEEVE HOUSE,
MELKSHAM,
WILTS.

[Wed] Aug. 19th

1908

My Billy.

I havent really time to write but I must-so a pack. I go tomorrow by a morning train but I am going to see Sims in London before leaving in the evening for Scotland. Her brother is much better, practically out of danger she thinks. Clive will only come up by an afternoon train & we leave for Scotland at

about 7.30. I don't know when you will hear from me again. For I don't suppose I shall have time to write tomorrow & Thursday I shall write the day after I have no idea how long it will take a letter to get to or from there understand part[illegible] I had your letter this morning. enclosing H.J.'s. What will he do next more I wonder? He seems

I mean business & I make no doubt you'll have a proposal before the year is out. What shall you say? I think him rather stupid for not letting very good care that your letter should be forwarded at once.

I heard from Saxon today. He had nothing to say except that I had only put 1.0 on my letter to him.

Your lodgings sound vile. Poor little animal. I hope you'll succeed in

getting another room. However
I know you & Melymbrosia
rise above such things.
I never heard anything
more right. More ish than
your departure from Wells.
You really ought to keep
a valet. Billy. How you
ever get anywhere is
the surprising thing. How
much did you leave be-
hind in the end? I skated
over your Inventory & read
it aloud to Clive very slowly
pretending that each word
was illegible so as to give
more weight to them. Send
me some more. Yrs V.B.

(29)

1908
21 Aug

Glencannich Lodge
Achnasheallach.
Ross-shire.

Friday.

My Billy.

We seem to have got into the wildest of countries here & I don't know when a letter will reach you. It's difficult to believe that it ever will. I sent you a card from Euston last night just to let you know that we were alive & then we started off in an atmosphere of luxury & wealth in 1st class sleepers. Would you believe that our return tickets cost altogether £15!

So it is plain that our company consisted of millions. We arrived there running at 9 o'clock soon after 9. & there breakfasted. & then we came on slowly reaching this place at about 1. The house is about 2 miles from the station & on the high road. but the station & high road are small & dere. licit. The station is fact is a private one & we ourselves have to give orders for the train to stop at it. The Scottish is talking to me. say "Will Mrs Ball like me to unpack for her." & are like old Nurse to look at - ugly. Clive & I found that Mr Bale & Mr Step

were not shooting & so we had a cold luncheon alone & then went for a short walk during which Clive killed three rabbits. Oh Billy! poor little furry beasts. It surpasses my imagination entirely, this wish to kill - does it grow? Of course another animal with fur such as a monkey would feel for them. I have no particular feeling for them, but I dont understand why anyone gets any pleasure from killing them. However they do, & I can keep out of the way of seeing the slaughter in future. Now Mr Sey & Mr Bell have arrived & Mr Arnim comes tonight. I reek of muscatol for the midges here

are appalling. so I think of
Greece. The country is beautiful
in spite of its stormy Christmas
darkness. Sometimes that
is too stormy & spoils it.
but we also get good shadows
on brown hill sides from
clouds & luckily the streams
are too difficult for any artists.
It is old & quite unlike any
other of my many experiences.
The house is bare & very ugly,
only meant as a shelter
when people are tired of skating.
I see that 10 days will be
more than enough of it for
me. Probably I shall spend
most of my time writing
to you. In less than a week
might now we shall be on
our way to Italy.
Yours V.B.

22 Aug (30) (1908)

Saturday -

They have all gone off to Whitby or Filey & I am left to spend my morning alone. I am going to be motored out to lunch with Clive & his party who are gone shooting. It is very cold. & how I am ever going to sketch I don't know for I see that it will always be either icy or the midges will be intolerable - I shall take refuge in painting some beasts for a "cracker" for Julian. They will be cut out in red wool & sewn on to a white ground by Dorothy. The effect will be hideous. I should think but Dorothy has often asked me to do it that I feel I must & perhaps a woman likes such things

to crawl in. Does it?
There is an atmosphere of
undiluted male here. How
you would hate it! If
only you were here we
should now light a fire
& sit over it talking the
whole morning, with our
skirts up to our knees.
You would say "Now what
shall we talk about?"
& I if I were tactful would
say "Our past." & then we
should begin & discuss all
our marvellous & Sergei's
delinquencies etc. & so come
to our present & then to
your future & whether &
whom you would marry.
& then at last to the one
great subject. "Now what
do you really think of your

brains Bobby?" I should say
with such genuine interest
that you'd have to take me
& we should instantly reach
the most exalted spheres. Why
aren't you here? This is a
vast house & a small monkey
could be put away anywhere
I feel it- like a lost opportunity
I am feeling extremely sarcastic
& can only give vent to it
in this remarkably unsatisfactory
way. Mr Grey asked me if
I wrote & I said "No. only
letters. but my sister writes
for the Times." I think he
was much impressed. He is
amusing & I like him. Mrs.
is rather fine to look at.
Mr Asquith is very easy &
keeps up a useful flow of
talk. I wonder when I

shall hear from you. I'm afraid I didn't give you our address in time & me & two letters wish have to be forwarded on from Seend. Of course there is only one post in & one out a day here - & no letters ever at breakfast which is rather dreary. Breakfast is at 8-30 too. Can you imagine me in my thickest winter clothes coming down to breakfast at 8-30? It isn't so appalling as it sounds. & really it is a relief. The instant Donna & the rest are only poor Sweet I should like to have here. At this age it doesn't matter but I see that I shall never again be able to leave him alone at Seend for more than a few days. Yours V. TB.

(31)

1908

Tues

Glencarron Lodge
Achnashellach
Ross-shire.

Aug. 25

My Billy.

I had 3 letters from you yesterday. But I deserved them for I hadn't had a line since I'd been in this desert land. One written on Thursday had one first to Second, one on Friday ~~had been sent~~ first should have arrived on Sunday but that of course there is no post in or out here on that benighted day. The other was written on Saturday. It takes two days for a letter to get to us from you & we calculate probably about 3 to you from us.

I read your letters over & decided with Clive that when they are published without their answers, people will certainly think that we had a most amorous correspondence. They read more like love-letters than anything else – certainly I have never received any from Clive that could compare with them – but then his, as you may imagine, were always worded with great restraint. I like love-letters – the more passion you put in the better. Billy. Soon you will learn just how to suit my taste in letters. I am ready for compliments & passion.

What do you mean by my "irrational & inarticulate passions"? All my passions are perfectly reasonable & only inarticulate when

they are thought unreasonable.
What is the good of painting
out Swiss virtues to you
when the mere mention of
them makes you storm
against her limitations. At
for Julian, you spend a
day in his company &
mine & I will tell you
exactly why & when his
ways seem to me charming
& endearing. I am in
reality the most critical
& rational of all the Stephens
& you by far the most
magnanimous.

You ask me to tell you
what Switzerland is like. But
you only have to look
at any landscape to know.
The hills are so plainly cut
out of card-board, with
hard edges clear against
each other or the sky, that

they are like nothing so much as the Rhine landscape at the Franco-British. It would drive me almost as mad as does the Seoul drawing-room to live opposite them always. Sometimes one gets a glimpse of better things in certain lights or on grey days. But generally they give me no aesthetic pleasure at all. The pleasure one does get from Scotland is, as Sheep says, of the senses. The heather smells delicious & the clear water looks extraordinarily pleasant. We went yesterday, Clive, Mr Sprot & I, for an expedition by motor to Loch Maree, one of the show places of the Highlands.

It is an enormous lake with great hills running down into it on all sides, but specially beautiful

31 ii

Today they have all gone out grouse shooting. I shall go out to lunch with them & shall take painting things & try & do a sketch this afternoon. Probably the midges will make it impossible. After dinner we play bridge. M. Asquith is very bad & I forget in the middle what are trumps but I have so far made 3/- for we play for very low life minds most chaste & mindedly engaged to this. I doubt if I shall ever come to Scotland again. I could not stand more than 10 days of it in any case & my plan for next year, if Clive wants to come here, is that I, with Julian, should

spend the time with you & Adrian. You see if Clive came here the Balls could not but think it natural that I should prefer to be with my family rather than with them, & of course I should take Julian with me wherever I went. However Clive most likely will want to come here either & in that case I hope we should all join in some country house.

One thing is quite clear to us both. Julian can never be allowed to spend more than a week or so alone at Seend. Evidently all their ideas about bringing up children are conventional & tiresome, & I don't see how that awful atmosphere of Sunday & best clothes could fail to affect a child for ever & ever a year. Poor little wretches, they so easily become conventional & lose their individual charm. It reminds me of George & all those horrors when I hear them saying that it is good for a child to go to parties & put on clean clothes for company.

I hope I shall have a letter from you today but the post doesn't come till this afternoon when I shall be out. I believe Clive gave you some good practical advice as to what to take to Italy. I shall be able to come & overhaul your arrangements on Wednesday. But if your good woman is so over-come by your luncheons that

she wants to wash for you.
for God's sake. let her - then
you may have a good stock
of clean things to start abroad
with. I shall take a few
medicaments, but not much.
We can easily get things
there: Take warm under
clothing - ~~under~~ winter combs
& cholera belts & warm
drawers - This reminds
me of Violet. I feel very
much as if we were setting
off for Greece again. M. Stas
went this year to Athens
& stayed with Rossos or
Ionides, he's spelt, who was
very kind to him - he was
ill there too - & the hotel
was comfortable & very cheap.

Yours
L.B.